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OF A RAIN MAKER

Some Personal Reminiscences of
Frank Melbourne.

HIS INITIAL TRIAL A SUCCESS

The Man and the Mystery—Guarded Secrets of His Work—Sensation of a Year—Failure and Death.

Rainmaker Frank Melbourne was mentioned in a local paper a few days ago. He is dead now, having killed himself about a year and a half ago. If he really had any secret he did his best to take it with him. He had burned all his belongings in a small stove in the room in which his body was found. This was in Kansas after a trial at cloud control that failed.

There are several people in Honolulu who knew Melbourne well when he was in the zenith of his fame and when he seemed to be successful. This was in Colorado, Wyoming and Nebraska seven or eight years ago. The writer was detailed to him for six months or so. Melbourne must have been in Honolulu once. He said he came from Sidney, where he had been a real estate dealer till he discovered how to manufacture showers. He received letters from a brother and other relatives in the Colonies.

The Wizard, as he was called, first located at Cheyenne, Wyo. This was likely because, barring half a dozen or more saloons to every down town square, that is the driest region on earth out of the Sahara district. Droughts there of the duration of eleven months, three weeks and six days are not uncommon. The records will show that for years at a stretch the rainfall has been less than half an inch per annum. Water comes from the snow that banks in the mountains in winter. It snows there in that season in a way evidently calculated to compensate for the absence of showers in the proper months. The writer can prove by people here in Honolulu that at the capital of Wyoming one March anyone could walk from a snow drift right on to the roof of a three-story building. People tunneled in and out of houses and stores. There was sleighing and skating on this snowfall of three days for six weeks. Bodies were found in dissipated drifts the following August.

On the plains sheep were smothered by the thousands and horses and steers perished by the hundreds. The same living affidavits can be produced if necessary to back up the statement that Decoration day parades have been postponed in that country on account of snow storms and that snow plows have been sent out by the Union Pacific Railway Company there in July. This is all true and extraordinary, but it has not much to do with Melbourne except by way of association.

Melbourne was a dreamy, reserved chap. He was about 32 in years, dark and tall and slight and handsome. He had deep and round black windows in his face. Melbourne was not unpleasant to one. But to get anything out of him was about like trying to bore into a granite slab with a corkscrew. He'd converse right enough till the subject of the modus operandi of his business was broached. There was simply no crossing that line. The keenest and most experienced fellows the best papers had, tried it and failed to a man. His partner and business manager was a Virginian to whom he had taken a tremendous liking. Frank Jones was his name and Col. Rainwater Jones was the title gained. The colonel was unable to learn any more about laboratory doings than anyone else did.

The first experiment was called a success, but there was never another like it. Those who were in any way interested can never forget it. There had been no rain for half an year. Melbourne with his two valises had been in a barn loft for forty-eight hours. He did not eat any during that time and it is very doubtful if he slept any. He looked famished and fatigued when he showed his face and collapsed completely when the trial had ended. For weeks there had been such a pure cobalt sky day after day as is seen only in that unbroken country. Melbourne had struck the mouth of a funnel out of the top of the barn. He refused to answer questions. The time set for his shower had passed an hour or more. A number of the special correspondents, including the writer, had filed the "stuff" for their afternoon papers. The latter from one end of the country to the other announced in their first editions that Melbourne had failed. Some of the head lines were flippant and some of them abused the poor fellow. There were abundant stories in the second

and following editions. The rain came, and so quickly was it dashed from what had been a clear dome and from so small a cloud that the thing seemed a miracle. It was a local downpour such as the country had not seen for a quarter of a century. Considerable damage was done to railway, state and county properties. Such was the surprise, the enthusiasm, the astonishment, that even those who doubted were forced to fall in with the multitude and either remain silent or admit that the man had made rain. It was the coincidence of an age.

Nothing like this happened for Melbourne or his associates or imitators again. Col. Rainwater Jones organized a stock company, published a pamphlet of testimonials and rates, and made contracts to moisten miles upon miles of territory at so much per acre, so much rainfall being guaranteed. The terms were good and patronage was plentiful. Melbourne was followed by the newspaper boys for a couple of unsuccessful experiments and then dropped as being too stale for the front page or any other page. But meantime the space writers had made a good thing out of him and all felt kindly towards him. Down in Nebraska once and again in Colorado the ranchers threatened to do him violence for failure to make rain. There was no call for anything of this sort, because Melbourne did not ask for advance money. He became more moody and less communicative and finally dropped out of sight. He was the sensation of that year. His picture was in every illustrated paper, and in the magazines. The Government sent a man to look after him.

Of the two valises, one probably contained clothing. The other he said had his chemicals and apparatus. One of the correspondents offered for the sum of \$250 to deliver Melbourne's valises at the office of a distant metropolitan paper, but the rascally enterprise was not undertaken. Melbourne may have been a trifle unbalanced mentally, but if so he was thoroughly honest about it. He had satisfied himself of the theory that the United States has since officially accepted—that precipitation could be caused—and he believed that clouds could be created and then handled. He bought chemicals at drug stores. It was with some of these chemicals that he cheated Daddy Time.

Makaweli.

There was a strong representation of stock for an annual meeting held yesterday of the Makaweli plantation corporation. Mr. Baldwin was in town to attend. The same officers were elected again, with the exception of C. M. Cooke, who is absent and who was succeeded by his local personal representative, Mr. Fred Lowrey. There was quite a talk over the property and its prospects. Conservative figures fix the estimates for the 1897-8 crop at 14,000 tons. It may be 15,000. The first calculation will insure a dividend of 20 per cent. as against but 5 last season.

University Club.

The Executive Committee of the University Club met yesterday afternoon and decided to have the annual meeting for the election of officers on Thursday, December 16, at 7:30 p. m., at "Overseas," the residence of S. M. Balfour. It was voted to have the meeting social and informal, and to reserve the semi-annual banquet until the return of Prof. Alexander Agassiz from the South seas early next year, when it is hoped that he will be the guest of the club.

A Tenor Soloist.

Mr. Alfred Davies who arrived from the Coast in the S. S. Rio Janeiro is an expert engineer and machinist. He has just returned from Mexico and thought he would like to see the Islands and make his home here if possible. Mr. Davies is quite a musician and was at one time solo tenor singer in Grace Episcopal church, San Francisco. Next Sunday morning at the service of the Second Congregation of St. Andrew's Cathedral he will sing a tenor solo.

A Change Made.

Fred Leslie, who has been connected with Peacock Brothers and Peacock & Company, almost continually since 1883, has left that employ. The connection was severed Sunday morning and was talked of not a little about town yesterday. Mr. Leslie has been manager of all the retail saloons of the company in Honolulu. No successor has yet been named.

The Big Pole.

John Ouder Kirk has a gang of men taking down the heavy and tall flag-staff at the bell tower. To remove it from the bed of concrete, blasting will be required. Work was started yesterday. The old bell has already gone over to the new house.

JAPAN'S POSITION

Avoids Unfriendly Attitude Toward United States.

NEW YORK SUN SO ANNOUNCES

Nicaragua Project Cited. England's Bimetallists Do Not Agree.

NEW YORK, November 21.—The New York Sun will announce editorially tomorrow, on what it claims is conclusive authority, that Japan has given ample evidence to this Government that it has no designs on the Nicaragua canal. An interview between Toru Hoshi, while Minister of Japan at Washington, with Mr. Rodriguez, representative of the Greater Republic of Central America, plainly showed the determination of Japan to maintain cordial relations with the United States and to reject any overtures, the acceptance of which might tend to place her in an unfriendly attitude toward this country.

The Sun editorially gives details of the meeting of these Ministers. Minister Rodriguez, it says, proposed that Japan should guarantee to Nicaragua sovereignty over the canal as well as its neutrality when open to commerce. This proposal was referred to the Tokyo Government, which rejected the special guarantee offer, but said it had no objection to joining other maritime nations having relations with Nicaragua in "all reasonable and proper measures for the preservation of the neutrality of the canal."

"If this," says the Sun, "had been the only message received at the time from Tokyo it might have been inferred that Japan was willing to combine with England and other European nations in a joint guarantee of the neutrality of the canal, instead of deferring to the known wish of the United States that the waterway should be under the special and sole guarantee of this country. As a matter of fact, however, simultaneously with the dispatch of instructions concerning the reply to be made to Rodriguez, Hoshi was directed to communicate with our Secretary of State for the purpose of ascertaining whether participation in such a general guarantee would be agreeable to the Government of the United States. This Hoshi immediately did, explicitly and frankly."

"There the matter rests, Rodriguez having gone home, and meanwhile even the commercial treaty projected between Japan and the Greater Republic of Central America remains incomplete. For purely commercial reasons Japan, not unnaturally, desires to obtain such a treaty, but she has convinced our State Department that she has no intention of participating in any undertaking even remotely or indirectly hostile to the interests of the United States in Nicaragua or elsewhere."

DISCRIMINATING CLAUSE.

It Will Probably Soon Get Into the Courts.

WASHINGTON, November 22.—It is not improbable that the questions involved in discriminating section 22 of the new tariff act will be brought to the courts for final determination.

Information has reached the Treasury Department that during the pendency of the question before the Attorney-General the Collectors at a number of ports assessed the 10 per cent. discriminating duty on transit goods from Canada under Consular seal as well as upon goods produced in Canada. One of these invoices, it is understood, was for a considerable quantity of china which arrived at Sault Ste Marie, Mich., from Dresden under Consular seal.

An appeal in this case, it is said, already has been taken to the Board of General Appraisers at New York. This Board, under the law, is not bound by the opinions of the Attorney-General or those of the Secretary of the Treasury, the courts alone having authority to review its findings. In case of a decision by the Board assessing the discriminating duty it is almost certain that the importers will take an appeal, but should they fail to do so it is not likely that the Government would take such action. The question, therefore, whether the case will go to the courts depends upon the

decision of the Board of General Appraisers.

BRYAN KICKS THE PIGSKIN.

The Democratic Leader's First Appearance on the Gridiron.

COLUMBIA (Mo.), November 23.—William J. Bryan appeared in Columbia today in an entirely new role. Mr. Bryan participated in his first game of football. Clad in a striped old gold and black sweater, the erstwhile Presidential candidate appeared on the athletic field of the Missouri University and took part in the game. It was a practice game between the varsity and alumni teams, and Mr. Bryan had been persuaded to go to the field by the college boys. Once on the field it was suggested that the distinguished guest take part in the game.

At the solicitation of Captain Hill and Coach Young Mr. Bryan consented to kick off for the alumni. Captain Hill offered the Nebraskan his sweater, which was pulled on, and amid a deafening college yell Mr. Bryan strode out on the field. The ball was placed in position, and after a few rehearsals Mr. Bryan planted his toe fairly and equally under the sphere and the ball went sailing down the field for forty yards. Mr. Bryan retired to the side lines and watched the scrimmage, continuing to wear the sweater during the game.

THREAT FROM THE KAISER.

Norway May Feel the Heavy Hand of the German Ruler.

LONDON, November 23.—A dispatch to the Daily Chronicle from Christiania with reference to the political conference between Norway and Sweden as to the relative rights of the two parts of the composite monarchy, says: "A prominent Swedish politician attributes to Emperor William the following statement: 'The Norwegians seek to accomplish their ends I will crush Norway as I have already crushed Greece.'"

MELBOURNE FIRE LOSS.

Insurance Companies Must Pay Over Three Millions.

MELBOURNE, November 22.—As a result of the fire which broke out at 2 o'clock yesterday morning and destroyed within three hours an entire block of buildings bounded by Elizabeth, Flanders and Swanson streets and Flanders lane, with the exception of two buildings on the Swanson-street front, the insurance companies lose \$3,650,000, of which about two-thirds will fall on British companies. Australian companies will lose the remaining sum.

ASKS APPROPRIATIONS.

Secretary Bliss Tenders His Annual Report.

WASHINGTON, November 18.—Secretary of the Interior Bliss, in his annual report, made public tonight, submits estimates aggregating \$156,532,419 for appropriations by Congress for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1899.

Discussing pensions, he says 200,000 pension claims are awaiting adjudication, and it is estimated that 40 or 50 per cent. of these will be finally admitted. If they are rapidly adjudicated they will swell the pension roll from \$5,000,000 to \$7,000,000. When, however, these claims are adjudicated and the first payments made thereon the amount of the pension roll will decrease very rapidly, possibly to \$125,000,000 or \$130,000,000 the first year.

Work on the Nicaragua canal is still suspended, and the company reports liabilities consisting of the amounts still due under the concessions to the company of \$6,705,000 of bonds and not exceeding \$100 cash liabilities outstanding unpaid; assets, unused capital stock, \$518,500 first mortgage bonds and the 2,420 shares of capital stock re-

(Continued on Second Page.)

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